

Drinking, Drug Use, and Driving

Impairment Begins With The First Drink or Drug:

For Safety's Sake, Never Drive After Drinking or Drug Use!

- About 3 in 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [NHTSA], 2001)
- Alcohol-related crashes cause one death every 31 minutes (Mothers Against Drunk Driving [MADD], 2006).
- In 2003, 77 percent of fatal crashes occurring from midnight to 3:00 AM involved alcohol (NHTSA, 2004).
- Alcohol was involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes in 2005 (NHTSA, 2005).
- In 2005, 254,000 persons were injured and 16,885 persons died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes in the United States (NHTSA, 2005).
- About 22% of the driving age public had driven a motor vehicle within two hours of consuming alcoholic beverages in 2000 (NHTSA, 2001).
- At BACs as low as 0.02 percent, alcohol affects driving ability and crash likelihood (MADD, 2003).
- Only time will sober a person up. Drinking strong coffee, exercising or taking a cold shower will not help (MADD, 2003).

Drug Use and Driving

- Drivers should not take certain prescription and/or over the counter drugs when driving. Be sure to read and adhere to all warnings when taking prescription or over the counter drugs before driving.
- According to the NHTSA, illegal drugs are used by approximately 10-22 percent of drivers involved in all motor vehicle crashes, often in combination with alcohol. In 1996, the percentage of drivers aged 16 to 20 who drove within 2 hours after using marijuana and another illegal drug was 39.7 percent (Parents. The Anti-Drug, 2003).
- The Department of Transportation has published two studies examining the impact of marijuana on driving performance. Marijuana - the most widely abused illegal drug - slows a driver's perception of time, space, and distance (Parents. The Anti-Drug, 2003).
- Research indicates that cocaine causes drivers to speed, change lanes without signaling and puts other innocent people at risk of a deadly accident (Parents. The Anti-Drug, 2003).

Prevention Strategies

The research suggests these strategies to strengthen the norm against driving while impaired:

- Use the value of friendship as a motivation for preventing drinking and driving. Participants expressed a desire to protect and be responsible for their friends. Encourage people to be there for their friends -- to take their turn as the designated driver.
- Provide a positive image of the person who prevents others from drinking and driving. Show immediate positive results such as gratitude or admiration for being a designated driver.

- Emphasize that responsible driving should be a consistent behavior. Clarify that a person doesn't have to drive impaired habitually to be dangerous.
- Teach skills for avoiding drinking and driving. People need to know how to plan ahead of time how to get home or who will drive. They also need lessons in how to convince others that they should not drive. The lessons should involve realistic situations such as large groups of same sex friends buying rounds of drinks at a bar.

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/traftech/1995/tt111.html>

The Holidays

- During the holidays, the percentage of drunk-driving incidents typically increases. In 2004, 1316 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve (NHTSA, 2005).
- Nationally, more than twice as many people are likely to die in alcohol-related traffic crashes on New Year's Eve than on non-holiday winter evenings (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. [NIAAA], 2001).
- Holiday Blues (Printer-Friendly PDF)
- Party Planning Tips (Printer-Friendly PDF)

Massachusetts

- For one of every 100 miles driven in Massachusetts in 1999, a person with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) $>.10$ sat behind the wheel (NHTSA, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 1999).
- An estimated total of 17,400 crashes in Massachusetts involved alcohol (NHTSA, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 1999).
- In 2002, 221 people died as a result of alcohol-related crashes (MADD, 2003).
- In 2002, 48% of all traffic deaths in MA were alcohol-related (MADD, 2003).

MA State Laws Regarding Driving Under the Influence:

Melanie's Law was passed on October 28, 2005, and it increased the penalties and administrative sanctions against those operating under the influence (OUI) in Massachusetts. For more information about Melanie's Law and some of the other laws that relate to driving under the influence in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts visit the following links:

- Melanie's Law: CHAPTER 122 OF THE ACTS OF 2005
- Melanie's Law Summary: Summary of Melanie's Law (PDF)
- General Laws: M.G.L. - Chapter 90, Section 24

Consumption of even one drink containing alcohol can affect driving ability and increase the likelihood of involvement in a motor vehicle accident. Impairment Begins with the First Drink: For Safety's Sake, Never Drive After Drinking!

How Alcohol and Drugs Affect Driving

Alcohol	Beer, Wine, Whiskey, Gin, Rum, Vodka, Tequila, etc.	1. Dulls judgment and concentration 2. Slows reflexes and reaction time 3. Leads to multiple, blurred and restricted side and night vision 4. Hinders muscle control and coordination 5. Exaggerates emotions 6. Increases drowsiness
Alcohol Plus Marijuana	Any Alcoholic Beverage and Pot, Hash, or T.H.C.	In addition to the effects of alcohol: 1. Dulls concentration and reasoning abilities 2. Slows reaction time 3. Leads to multiple vision and slowed glare recovery time 4. Hinders muscle control coordination, maneuvering ability and ability to recognize traffic signals 5. Affects short term memory and tracking ability 6. Increases distraction and drowsiness
Alcohol Plus Antihistamines	Any alcoholic beverage and cold remedies such as Sudafed, Coricidin	In addition to the effects of alcohol: 1. Dulls judgement and concentration 2. Slows reaction time 3. Leads to reduced vision 4. Hinders coordination 5. Increases drowsiness, confusion, and anxiety
Alcohol Plus Tranquilizers	Any alcoholic beverage and sleep medications such as Valium, Librium, Seconal, etc.	In addition to the effects of alcohol: 1. Dulls judgment and concentration 2. Slows reflexes and reaction time 3. Leads to multiple, blurred and restricted side and night vision 4. Hinders coordination and motor skills 5. Increases drowsiness

(Source: National Commission Against Drunk Driving)

Sources Cited and Useful Links

- NIAAA Alcohol Alert: Alcohol and Transportation Safety
<http://alcoholism.about.com/library/blnaa52.htm?iam=savvy&terms=e+learning+pilot>
- MADD: Tie One On For Safety
http://www.madd.org/madd_programs/0,1056,1131,00.html
- NHTSA
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>
- NIAAA
<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>
- Parents. The Anti-Drug: Get the Facts About Drugged Driving
http://www.theantidrug.com/news/dd_facts.html
- National Commission Against Drunk Driving
<http://www.ncadd.com/>